

§ 769.16 Public information.

(a) Promptly after determining that a petition is complete, the Director shall notify the general public of the receipt of the petition and request submissions of the relevant information by a newspaper advertisement placed once a week for two consecutive weeks in the newspaper providing broadest circulation in the region of the petitioned area, and in the FEDERAL REGISTER. The advertisement and FEDERAL REGISTER notice shall include a description of the boundaries of the petitioned area, the allegations of fact, and information regarding where the petition is available for public review.

(b)(1) Beginning immediately after a petition is filed, OSM shall compile and maintain a record consisting of all documents relating to the petition filed with or prepared by OSM with the exception of that information excluded under § 769.16(b)(2). OSM shall make the record available to the public for inspection free of charge and for copying at a reasonable cost during all normal business hours at its Washington, D.C. office. OSM shall also maintain information in or near the area in which the petitioned land is located; this information shall be available for public inspection, free of charge, and for copying at reasonable cost during all normal business hours. At a minimum, this information shall include a copy of the petition.

(2) OSM need not make available to any person or entity the specific location of property proposed to be nominated to be listed or listed in the National Register of Historic Places if it is determined that disclosure of that information would create a risk of destruction or harm to such properties. Withheld information must be disclosed when a designation of unsuitability would rest primarily on an allegation based on that information.

§ 769.17 Hearing requirements.

(a) Within 10 months after receipt of a complete petition, OSM shall hold a public hearing in the locality of the area covered by the petition. If all petitioners and intervenors agree, the hearing need not be held. OSM may subpoena witnesses as necessary. The

hearing may be conducted with cross-examination of expert witnesses only. A record of the hearing shall be made and preserved. No person shall bear the burden of proof or persuasion. All relevant parts of the data base and inventory system and all public comments received during the public comment period shall be included in the record and considered by OSM in deciding the petition.

(b)(1) OSM shall give notice of the date, time, and location of the hearing to:

(i) Local, State, and Federal agencies which may have an interest in the decision on the petition;

(ii) The petitioner and the intervenors; and

(iii) Any person known by OSM to have a property interest in the petitioned area.

(2) Notice of the hearing shall be sent by certified mail to the petitioner and intervenors, and by regular mail to other persons involved in the proceeding, and postmarked not less than 30 days before the scheduled date of the hearing.

(3) OSM shall notify the general public of the date, time, and location of the hearing by placing a newspaper advertisement once a week for 2 consecutive weeks prior to the scheduled date of the public hearing in the locale of the area covered by the petition and once during the week prior to the scheduled date of the public hearing. The consecutive weekly advertisements must begin between 4 and 5 weeks prior to the scheduled date of the public hearing.

(c) OSM may consolidate into a single hearing the hearings required for each of several petitions which relate to areas in the same locale.

(d) If any petitions relates to an area of Federal lands which is the subject of a pending surface coal mining and reclamation operations permit application, OSM may, with consent of all petitioners and intervenors, coordinate the hearing on the petition required under paragraph (a) of this section with any hearing on the permit application or informal conference held in accordance with section 513(b) of the Act and § 740.13 of this chapter on the permit application. Nothing in this